

XVI.

16.

RELIGION AND THE STATE.

A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED IN THE

First Presbyterian Church,

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA,

JULY 4th, 1858.

BY

REV. DAVID H. PORTER, PASTOR.

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PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.  
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Savannah:

POWER PRESS OF JOHN M. COOPER & Co.

1858

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COMPARISON

THESE ARE THE RESULTS OF THE EXPERIMENT

THE RESULTS OF THE EXPERIMENT ARE AS FOLLOWS

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

*Savannah, July 6th, 1858.*

REV. D. H. PORTER,

DEAR SIR:

Will you have the kindness to furnish us, for publication, with a copy of your discourse delivered in the First Presbyterian Church on the morning of the 4th instant.

Yours truly,

GEO. G. FARIES.  
H. A. CRANE,  
EDWARD J. HARDEN,  
CHARLES W. WEST,  
WM. CRABTREE.

*Members of the  
Session and Trustees  
of First Pres-  
byterian Church.*

*Savannah, July 12th, 1858.*

GENTLEMEN:

I have just received your note requesting for publication, a copy of the discourse delivered on the 4th instant.

It is not without reluctance that I consent for a production prepared so hastily, under the pressure of other duties and with but little time for revision to go to the press. But in deference to your judgment and feeling that the pastoral relations between us give you a right to my labors in any form you deem profitable to yourselves or useful to others, I do not feel at liberty to deny your request; and my prayer is, that "the God of our fathers" may own and bless even *this* humble effort in the cause of truth and righteousness.

Truly yours in the gospel,

DAVID H. PORTER.

GEO. G. FARIES, Esq.,  
H. A. CRANE, Esq.,  
HON. EDWARD J. HARDEN,  
CHARLES W. WEST, M. D.,  
WM. CRABTREE.

RELIGION

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## DISCOURSE.

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PSALM, xxxiii; 12.—“Blessed is The Nation whose God is The Lord.”

I cannot but regard it as a happy and significant coincidence, that this anniversary of our National Independence should be associated with the solemn and sacred services of the sabbath. There is something impressive and imposing in the thought that this day, dear to every American heart, and fraught with glorious memories of the past, should be set apart in the providence of God to *His* service, and occupied in the public worship of the sanctuary.

All over this favored land of ours, from the mountains to the sea-board, from north to south, from east to west, the sun of the sabbath is pouring his genial rays. In ten thousand temples of worship the voice of prayer and praise arises like a cloud of grateful incense to the God of nations who wrested this western world from the hand of the spoiler and gave it to us as “a goodly heritage.”

What could be more appropriate than that this birthday of our liberties should be consecrated to the worship of our fathers' God, under whose protecting shield they fought, and by whose beneficent providence they triumphed? In the proud, exultant admiration of the patriot heroes who fought our battles, we are too apt to forget the *God* of battles who *won* them for us—and may it not be that in arranging the wheels of time, he has brought this anniversary within the limits of the sabbath, that by investing it with the public service of the sanctuary, we may be reminded of His overruling agency in

the achievement of our Nationality, and rebuked for our failure to recognize that agency and render him the honor and homage which Belong to his Holy and Blessed Name?

Under these circumstances, therefore, it will be pardonable if we turn aside a little from the ordinary drift of pulpit discourse and give it *a national* as well as an individual direction. Indeed, the occasion itself, the providential coincidence just alluded to, seems to demand it. God who "ordaineth the course of nature and appointeth the times and seasons," has invested this national jubilee with the sanctity of the sabbath—brought it in direct contact with the regular, public worship of the sanctuary, and thereby calls upon us to improve the occasion in the manner indicated.

We propose, therefore, to consider the subject of Religion *in its national bearings*—its relations to the State, striving to discover *what those relations are*; and to illustrate as we may be able the truth announced in the text, looking for guidance in our ignorance, to the Divine Spirit by whose inspiration it was written "*blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.*"

There is a very close connexion between the Psalm from which the text is taken and the one which immediately precedes it; so close indeed that although separated into different chapters, they are both included under the same title. The concluding sentiment of the thirty second is repeated in the beginning of the thirty third, and more fully developed in the verses which follow. The injunction of the Psalmist in the outset is to rejoice in the Lord, to praise him with harp and psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. In the succeeding verses (at least as far as the twelfth which contains the text) he presents us with the various reasons for thus praising the Lord, which reasons are deduced from the two-fold consideration of the excellency of His character, and the grandeur of His works. "The word of the Lord is right; and all his works are done in truth—He loveth righteousness and judgment, the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." His infinite power and wisdom are displayed in the wondrous works of His hand: "by the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth; let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the



world stand in awe of Him, for He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast!" From this presentation of the character and works of the Lord, the sentiment of the text naturally follows. If he be so glorious and excellent and powerful a Being it is a plain and ready conclusion that "blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." Here we have the prosperity and happiness of a nation predicated upon certain relations which may obtain between that nation and God; hence it becomes a question not only of religion but of true patriotism also, to determine what those relations are and how they may be brought about in any particular case.

Since He is the universal and absolute Sovereign and Ruler of all men and things, Jehovah is, in this sense, the God of all nations. But He was in a peculiar and special sense, the "God of Israel." He formally proposed Himself to them, under the most solemn and impressive circumstances as their King—the Head of their government. They on their part accepted the offer, took the vow of allegiance to Him as their political Ruler, and by the unanimous voice of the people He was constituted the King of their nation—thus originating that peculiar form of government known as a Theocracy, the only instance in which it has ever existed: and since the circumstances which occasioned it have long since passed away and will perhaps never again occur, and since the purposes for which in the economy of God it was instituted, have been fully accomplished, we may readily conclude that this is the only instance of a Theocratic form of government which the annals of time will ever record. It is evident therefore that Jehovah is not, and we may venture to say will never be, the God of any nation in precisely the same sense in which He was the God of Israel; for though He shall ever be the God of all nations, inasmuch as He is the Sovereign Ruler and will ultimately be the Judge of all, yet the peculiar *political* relation which existed between Himself and the Jewish People, is nowhere to be found and must not be expected. If the text therefore refers *only to a Theocracy* as the condition of national prosperity, it is *to us* a dead letter, containing neither instruction nor comfort.

But there is a true and an important sense in which Jehovah may be and ought to be the God of every nation—a sense in

which the conditions of the text may be fully met and its promised blessedness realized. It is to be found in the universal diffusion of the principles of *the Gospel of Jesus Christ*, whose inaugural song as sung by the heavenly host, was "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!"—as if announcing beforehand, the two grand twin-principles—twain and yet *one*, upon which that Gospel is projected, the glory of God and the good of man.

We do not plead for, nor do we think the scriptures inculcate any National Establishment of religion, in the technical sense of that term. But we plead for the implantation of the principles of evangelical religion in *the hearts* of the people, the rulers and the ruled. We plead for the supremacy of right and justice—the practice of christian virtue. We plead for a spirit of ready compliance with the dictates of conscience, holiness and truth. When these principles are recognized and received by the heart, they will appear in the life and character. When the leaven of the gospel has been thoroughly *kneaded* into the great mass of the people, its elevating, regenerating power will be seen and felt by the surrounding nations, and the path of that people will be "as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." There will be among them a spirit of willing subjection to good and wholesome law—a subjection enforced not by the murderous bayonet or glittering sword, but by the convictions of right and justice. For the tendency of religion is to curb and control that principle of *selfishness* which leads to the infringement of our neighbor's rights, and which is one of the conditions necessitating the existence of civil law. There will also be among such a people the full recognition and constant application of the golden rule, "whatsoever ye would that men should do to you do ye even so to them." A rule which is not only applicable to intercourse between individuals, but, as the Chief Magistrate of this great nation has recently well said, it "contains the avowed principles which lie at the foundation of the law of nations." There will be, at the same time, a pervading and controlling sense of the greatness and majesty of God and His claims to our obedience—a continual reference to His will as the rule, and His glory as the end of existence; and these two principles, the will of



God as our rule, and the glory of God as our end, must form the basis, not only of individual, but also of *national* well-being.

It is in this sense that Jehovah may be and ought to be the God of every nation; and it requires no argument to prove—it needs no prophetic vision to see, that the favor of God must rest upon such a nation, and her career be cheered by the smile of the Lord. “Happy,” thrice happy, “is that people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord!” Language cannot describe, nor imagination conceive, the supremacy and prosperity of a nation whose people should all be righteous and holy; a nation in which public opinion, so powerful an agent for good or evil, should perfectly harmonize with the voice of an enlightened conscience—God’s vicegerent, who erects his tribunal and holds his court in every man’s bosom. No fancy can depict the prosperity and power of that people among whom there is a general diffusion of holiness and the universal prevalence of Christian virtue. “In such a State there would be no such thing as faction. Public determinations would really be the result of the united wisdom of the community; and they would be faithfully executed by the united strength of it. Some would in a higher way contribute, but all would in some way contribute to the public prosperity; and in it each would enjoy the fruits of his own virtue.” Such a condition of things, though never yet realized upon earth, is no mere dream of the enthusiast. The distinguished writer from whom the above extract is taken,\* deals more with ponderous logic than flowers of fancy. There is, as he clearly shows, nothing unreasonable or improbable in such a view. The natural and necessary tendency of holiness or virtue, (in Gospel parlance they are synonymous terms,) is to promote national, as well as individual prosperity; and there is a corresponding tendency in sin to degrade and destroy. A nation is the aggregate of individuals; these individuals are moral agents, sustaining to each other moral relations, and, therefore, united upon a *moral basis*; this *moral* union is their strength, and the strength of their union depends, of course, upon the perfection of those moral ties which bind them together. But the natural

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\*Bishop Butler: Analogy, part 1st, chap. 3d.

tendency of sin is to weaken and sever all moral ties; it is therefore, essential weakness, and must end in misery. On the other hand, the natural tendency of holiness or virtue is to develop and strengthen those ties, and bring them to perfection; it is, therefore, essential power, and must end in prosperity and happiness. Every man then in our nation is an element of strength or weakness, just in proportion as he is virtuous or vicious, righteous or sinful, holy or corrupt. If every citizen were holy and righteous the Republic would present the grand spectacle of an impregnable fortress—a solid rampart of moral masonry, every stone strong and perfect in its own integrity, and united to its fellow in bonds inseparable. Or better still: if every citizen were a *true* Christian—impelled by motives of supreme love to God and unselfish love to his brethren, holding the will of God as the invariable rule of his life, and the glory of God as the ultimate end of his being—then would our nation rise with grand and magnificent proportions, a holy temple of the Lord, imposing in her splendor, glorious in her strength, bewildering in her beauty, and limited in power only by the limits of earth! Every man in this magnificent structure would constitute “a living stone,” each bound to the other and all together, by those eternal principles of holiness and love which link our destinies to the throne of God. Our nation would be “the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth;” peace would dwell within her walls, and prosperity within her palaces; she would present to the universe a *national* fulfilment of that glorious prediction concerning the Church, “behold I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires—And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones.—Great shall be the peace of thy children, and in righteousness shalt thou be established!” A consummation most devoutly to be wished, and though we may never live to see it realized, we may, at least, approach it; and it becomes the duty of every citizen, especially every *christian* citizen, to pray for it, and labor for it—to labor for it by conforming his own life to the holy principles of the Gospel, and striving in the proper way to extend the influence of those principles to the hearts and lives of his fellow-men. But, on the other hand, one corrupt

and wicked man, one rotten, crumbling stone, in this national edifice, is an element of weakness, tending to corrupt and disintegrate his fellow; if *all* were abandoned and reprobate, the monstrous fabric would fall of its own weight; anarchy, ruin and wretchedness would be the certain result! "Sin is a reproach," and will ultimately ruin, not only an individual, but a nation; but "blessed," indeed, "is the nation whose God is the Lord!"

These truths apply without exception both to the people and the *rulers* of a nation. But if they concern one class more than another, it is those who occupy positions of authority. God has ordained it as a law attaching to human governments, that the prosperity of a State largely depends upon the moral character of her rulers. Whatever be the form of government, the peculiar relations between the ruler and the people seem to involve this principle, and for its verification we may safely appeal to the history of any nation or people. Especially is it manifest in Hebrew history. Take the case of Ahaz for example; he openly profaned the worship and service of God, and as the result, 120,000 of the people were slain in one day—all valiant men; 200,000 were carried away in captivity—men, women and children; the land was left desolate; their cities were burnt with fire; and it is tersely added in the sacred narrative, that "the Lord brought Judah low *because of Ahaz*." Or take the case of Hezekiah, his son and successor: "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord." In the first month of his reign he "opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them:" he restored the public worship and service of God; reinstated the Priests and Levites in their official and ministerial functions; he brought out again the law and commandments of the Lord, which had been so long despised, and as the result of this course, the people were brought back from captivity, their cities rebuilt, the land replenished, and the nation raised to a remarkable degree of prosperity. In faithfully loving and serving God *as a man*, Hezekiah more truly served and better ruled his people *as a king*. It will not do to say that this principle belonged *only* to the Hebrew polity, because of its Theocratic form. God is himself unchangeable, and the rules which He has established for the government of His



creatures are also unchangeable. Besides this, whatever be the relation which God sustains to the nation, the moral relation subsisting between the people and the rulers of that nation, under any form of government, is substantially *the same*; and it is this secondary relation in which the principle in question chiefly finds its basis. This relation is such as to constitute the ruler, in a certain sense, the *representative* of the ruled. A sort of identity is established between them, so that the virtues of the ruler issue in the benefit of the people, and his vices in their injury. There is also the force of example which must flow down from those in authority to those who are under them; there is a *natural gravitation of influence* from the higher to the lower. The vicious habits and ungodly practices of the former are caught up and imitated, and, in most cases, exaggerated by the latter. Hence the divine injunction, "he that ruleth over men must be just, ruling *in the fear of God*"; hence also the Psalmist's declaration, "the wicked walk on every side, when the vilest are exalted." And this very exaggeration of vice on the part of the people (especially in a government like ours) reproduces itself, in yet stronger colors, in the representative; so that there is a reciprocal influence, steadily increasing, between them. The corrupt representative corrupting the people, and this corruption of the people tending still further to demoralize the representative; for he must conform to the standard which he has raised among his constituents, or be set aside for one more corrupt than himself. It is a tremendous judgment upon any people to have sent among them or set over them corrupt and wicked counsellors, for God *will* visit them for the sins of their rulers. The best christian is the truest patriot, and no people can ever be what God would have them be, nor as prosperous, happy and powerful in their influence for good as they *ought* to be, until their rulers are God-fearing, God-serving men! If those to whom, under God, the destinies of our beloved land are more immediately committed, and who stand at the helm of State, were pervaded by the principles of piety and true godliness, having their minds and hearts richly imbued with the grace of God, we need never fear for the fate of our nation! If every magistrate, from the highest to the lowest, if every legislator and executive officer throughout the

length and breadth of the land, were an earnest, faithful, true-hearted follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, what a happy and prosperous people would ours be! Who does not see and *feel* that we would verify the declaration of the text, that "blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord!" But if a corrupt *citizen* be an element of weakness in the State, how much more a corrupt and ungodly ruler! Would that some messenger might so whisper this truth in the ear and impress it upon the heart of every office-bearer in the Republic, that he could not escape a controlling sense of the solemn duties and responsibilities which invest his position.\*

In connexion with this subject there are several sources of error, to which those who occupy public positions are exposed—errors whose tendency is to banish the sanctions of religion from their proceedings, and whose effect has been to divorce religion, in many respects, from our national existence, depriving us, just to that extent, of the blessedness spoken of in the text.

Among the first and most important of these errors, we conceive to be that which entertains a false or imperfect notion of the State itself—a mistaken notion of *the origin and grounds of civil government*. It will readily be conceded that no one can adequately fulfil the official duties of government, whether legislative, executive or judicial, who entertains imperfect or improper notions of what government *is*. It is not, in its essential nature, a thing of chance or choice, depending for its existence upon the consent of those who are included within it: it is not a thing which may or may not be, as we please; not the result of an artificial combination or "social compact," whose authority is based upon caprice; it is not a mere conventional agreement, which may exist only by sufferance—God has indeed left it to the various communities and nations to select that particular *form* of government which they may deem best; and in this respect the Apostle Peter calls it the

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\*We are not speaking evil of our rulers or magistrates, towards whom religion itself enjoins reverence; nor will we be so misunderstood; we are only pleading for the recognition of a principle too often forgotten, but which is clearly revealed in the word of God and fully exemplified in the history of human affairs.



“Ordinance of *man*.” But we are speaking now of the *essential nature* of government, its origin and grounds; in this respect it is the ordinance of God; hence, the Apostle Paul declares “there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God—they are *God’s ministers*.” The State is the ordinance of God in the sense that its necessity is laid in the nature with which man is endowed by the Creator. This will readily appear from the fact that man is by nature a social being. There are implanted within the elements of his constitution certain feelings and principles which impel him to seek the intercourse and companionship of his kind; accordingly, we always find him in every age or country, living in a social state or condition. But it is at the same time evident that men cannot live in a social state without some kind of *law*. If man had retained the original condition of holiness and integrity in which he was created, it is a question whether any formal system of government would have been necessary: probably not, for we cannot conceive how in such a condition, the principles which now necessitate the sanctions of civil law, could have found place. But upon this point it is vain and unprofitable to speculate. We know that man is by nature a social being; he must live in society; and we know also, that as the result of our common depravity, there is a tendency to *conflict* between individuals. There are certain principles and impulses, right and proper in themselves, and when properly controlled by the higher attributes of our nature, but which have been perverted and thrown out of their originally just proportions by the disorganizing effect of sin, and which now lead us to infringe the rights of our neighbor. Ambition, lust and anger; revenge, self-seeking and arrogance; inducing fraud, injustice and cruelty—murder, rapine and rebellion—must be restrained by some controlling power, else the result will be discord, anarchy, confusion and the ultimate destruction of the social state, and consequently, of the race. This controlling power, whatever form it may assume, wherever vested and by whomsoever exercised, is *government*. Man is so constituted by the great author of his being that society is necessary to his existence and the perfection of his faculties; government is in turn, necessary to the existence of society; hence emerges

*the state*, as an institution of divine appointment, deriving its authority from the will of God.\*

It is manifest that such a view of the State at once invests it with a solemn and sacred import. It is the creature of God intimately connected with the divine purposes of his moral government; and what a withering rebuke does this view of the State level at those political tricksters and demagogues who so recklessly handle her interests—who so lightly and oftentimes, sinfully seek her offices. How can any man who has a proper conception of what the State *is*, and the weighty responsibilities attaching thereto, aspire to official position without being prepared for its duties? And when such a position is secured by the corruption of the people, by the low cunning and artifice of the demagogue, by pandering to the depraved appetites and sinful propensities of our fallen nature, what can such a man expect but the curse of God upon himself and the people whom he represents? How can such a man with any adequate sense of responsibility, discharge the functions of an office ordained of God—take part in the management of this creature of God, into which he has introduced himself by an open contempt of the Deity? Well may we fear for the fate of our beloved land when we see the sacrifice of principle for position; well may we tremble when the most sacred interests of a great people are imperiled by the schemes of selfish ambition and personal preferment, or recklessly endangered by the intrigue and chicanery of political jobbers and “place-men” who are neither restrained by the fear of God nor actuated by true love of their country! But give us men of pure hearts as well as great minds—men of holy lives and christian principles—God-fearing men of faith and prayer, give us such men as *these* to make our laws and rule our nation, and *then* shall ours be that “blessed nation whose God is the Lord!”

Another error connected with this subject, and which proves

\*See Paley's Mor. and Pol. Phil. Bk., VI, chapters 1st and 3rd. Blackstone's Commentaries, vol. I. Introd., sec. 2nd. Calhoun's works, (disq. on gov.,) vol 1st. At the head of those who plead for “a social compact” as the foundation of government, we may place the venerable name of Locke; we do not hesitate to say, however, that this latter view of the subject cannot be sustained *in fact*: and if adopted in theory, will involve us in unanswerable difficulties.

a fruitful source of evil, is the impression, that, because there is not in this country (as there should not be in any country,) a *national establishment* of religion, therefore, God has no care for the State, and no concern whatever with national affairs. This argument proceeds upon the false assumption that the national obligations of religion depend upon the existence of a national church. The premises therefore are false, the reasoning fallacious, and the conclusion fatally wrong.

A national establishment of religion is an unwarrantable encroachment upon the rights of conscience. The State is the creature of God, and *because* it is such (among other reasons,) it has not the right or power to prescribe rules of faith or practice in the matter of religion—this would be investing a creature with the prerogatives of the Creator, who is alone Lord of the conscience. “God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his word or beside it in matters of faith and worship.” But while thus objecting to an “established church,” we must not run into the opposite extreme of supposing that there are *no* national obligations of religion. The manner in which these obligations must be brought to bear upon our *nationality* is *through our individuality*, and not through the intervention of any legally authorized ecclesiastical machinery. It is not only unscriptural, but unphilosophical, to suppose that because there is no national church in this country, a man is divested of all responsibility to God as soon as he becomes a member of our national councils or an officer of the civil government. Responsibility, in the last analysis, is personal and individual. But when a man rises from a private to a public position he by no means loses his individuality; he is still *a man*, a moral, intelligent agent, and as much a subject of the divine law as before. He is a man in new relations, but he brings to those relations the same responsibility attaching to his personality in his private position. The State is made up of individuals; though acting in a public capacity and by association of effort, they are individuals still. Officers are elected, legislators are chosen and laws are passed by the votes of individuals; and these individuals, *as such*, are amenable to the law of God. As has been truly and eloquently said by a distin-



guished living Philosopher and Christian,\* “the duties of the state are the duties of individuals; the crimes of the state are the crimes of individuals; the sins of the state are the sins of individuals; the prosperity of the state is the prosperity of individuals. The state is nothing apart from the men who constitute it.” It is obvious, therefore, what relation religion sustains to the state, and what its national bearings are. The obligations of religion rest upon the state, in the sense that they rest upon each individual composing it. “A state is bound to reverence the Gospel, in the sense that all its members are obliged, on pain of the second death, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; and a state is bound to be religious, in the sense that every man in it is bound to fear God and work righteousness”, whether he occupy a public or private position. Jehovah may and ought to be the God of every nation, in the sense that he may and ought to be the God of every individual composing it. It is as individuals that a nation exists, as individuals a nation acts; as individuals her rulers and people live; as individuals they must die; as individuals they must be judged at the bar of God, where all distinctions of time are lost in the tremendous issues of eternity; and it is as individuals that they must be acquitted or condemned at that solemn assize, when the great white Throne shall be set in mid heaven, and the books opened and the dead small and great stand before God, and be judged out of those things which are written in the books, according to their works! “When the Son of Man shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered *all nations*; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.” There will be no distinction in this solemn and awful scene, between the ruler and subject; between the statesman and the private citizen; but all will stand before God *as men*, as moral, intelligent, accountable *creatures*. Each one shall be stripped of all *accidentals* and appear *as he is*; he shall be reduced to his pure individuality, and then if never before, shall he be brought to the intense

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\*Rev. Dr. Thornwell, of S. C., to whose instructions I am indebted for many of the views herein contained.

contemplation of the deepest and most solemn of all relations—the relation between the creature and the Creator!

Now if this doctrine of personal responsibility to God could be generally diffused among our people and effectually impressed upon all who occupy places of trust and authority, who can over-estimate the blessed result? The effect would be both to raise the standard of qualification for official position and secure the faithful and conscientious discharge of all its duties. If each member of our national councils and of our state governments could be made to feel that in every public, as well as private act, he shall be held rigidly and personally responsible *to God*, then would our halls of legislation become scenes of venerable and solemn grandeur. The light of God's favor would shine amid our council chambers, and abashed by its radiant glory, fanaticism, partizan zeal and ruffianism would shrink into outer darkness—just as the owls and bats and beasts of prey skulk into their holes and hiding places at the rising of the sun! In making laws for men, there would be a controlling respect and reverence for the laws of God; our nation would rejoice in cumulating and culminating glory; our people would lie down in the green pastures of prosperity and walk beside the still waters of peace; and although we have no Theocratic form of government, no national establishment of religion, and devoutly hope we never shall—yet ours would emphatically be that “blessed nation *whose God is the Lord!*”

There *was* a time when Jehovah seemed to be our God. Just before the spirit of Religious Liberty was unfettered by the blows of Luther's battle-axe, God opened before it this western world where it might grow and thrive unshackled by the chains of oppression. God brought it over the broad Atlantic wave and gave it an asylum in this goodly land flowing with milk and honey. Who does not see the movement of his wonder-working providence in the close proximity of the discovery of a new hemisphere to the rise and progress of the Reformation in the old! who does not feel that the God of battles threw over our infant nation the protecting shield of His omnipotence and guided its faltering steps through the heat and cold and storm and blood of the Revolution, when it was not able to walk alone? and who does not confess that the



brightest trait in the peerless character of that incomparable man who led our armies to battle, was his *humble, ardent, deep-toned piety*—at once the corner-stone and key-stone of all his virtues? In all the smoke and thunder of the battle, in all the pride and glory of victory, Washington does not appear half so great as when he is seen in the solitude and silence of the slumbering camp, bending in devout meditation over the page of inspiration, or bowing his knees in humble prayer! He was a servant of the most high God—a believer in the Gospel of Peace—a follower of Jesus Christ—In all his duties, public and private, acting under a pervading sense of his personal responsibility to God, and giving to His service that respect and honor which are His due. Jehovah was *his* God and the God of his nation. And among other lessons which God designed to teach us in the life and times of this wonderful man, not the least important is that the successful discharge of the duties which invest the office of statesman, ruler and military chieftain is not incompatible with the obligations of religion and piety—nay, that other things being equal, *he* will best love and serve his country who most faithfully loves and serves his God; a lesson which, alas! we have been slow to learn and swift to forget; for the lamentable fact of the present day seems to be that he who enters the political arena must leave his religion behind him, and that when he enters the service of his country, he must abandon the service of his God! This we fear is at least the tendency of present affairs; and when this tendency becomes *effect*, Jehovah will surely cease to be our God in *any* sense except in that of an avenging Judge arising to shake terribly the earth and to vindicate the honor and glory of His Holy and Blessed Name!

But what is our duty? Where is the remedy? What must we do? Our duty as christian patriots is obvious. The remedy is to be found in the diffusion of religious principles—in the propagation, *among the people*, of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the great scheme of glory to God and good to man. Our safety, not only as individuals, but as a nation—not only in time, but in eternity, is to be found and our permanent prosperity secured in the supremacy of righteousness and truth, in the establishment of holiness and christian virtue. This can be done, as

we have seen, only by bringing the Gospel to bear, in all its purity and power, upon the individuals who compose our nation: and to whom, under God, is *this* work committed, unless to those whose own hearts have been pervaded by the savor of the Gospel?—Here we find the burden of responsibility which rests upon you and me, christian hearer, and upon every one who has named the name of Jesus and enlisted under His banner. It is time, high time that the christians of our country should rise to a conception of their duty in this matter. Be not deceived by the infidel fallacy that the state has no “established church,” and consequently, has nothing to do with religion. The state in its official capacity, *has* “nothing to do with religion:” but religion has, or *ought* to have a great deal to do with the state. What is a state? Is it a mere abstraction? an unsubstantial *idea* which finds no corresponding reality in fact? Not at all. A state is an aggregate of individuals—a collection of immortal, accountable creatures; and upon every one of these immortal, accountable individuals, religion has a claim supported by the supreme authority of God, and involving the solemn issues of eternity. It is time then for us to appreciate and act upon the precise bearing which religion has upon the prosperity and glory of the state through the individuals which compose it. We do not ask that our religion may be established by law; but that our laws may be established by religion. We do not believe that the Gospel needs the support of the state; but the state sorely needs the conservative influence of the Gospel. I solemnly believe that the prosperity and glory of this great nation of ours are dependent upon the institutions of religion; and the heart of every christian patriot must exult in hope when he remembers with what wonderful power the Spirit of God has recently pressed the truths of the Gospel home to the hearts and consciences of the people. From every quarter of the land, from north, south, east and west, tidings have reached us of the marvellous triumphs of Grace. Within a few months past, thousands of immortal beings have been brought, with humble, broken and believing hearts, to the foot of the Cross—translated from a life of sin and iniquity into a life of holiness and obedience to God. Surely this is no slight indication that notwithstanding the wild, mad schemes of fren-

zied fanaticism, and the low cunning of reckless demagogues— notwithstanding the baneful influence of those who pull the wires of partizanship and mingle the poisonous elements in the seething cauldron of political corruption,—this great Republic, bequeathed to us as a sacred, blood-bought heritage from our fathers, will continue to prosper, a glorious instrument, “fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners,” in working out the great moral purposes of the Divine Government!—Surely we may indulge the cheering hope that the recent religious movement in this country—a movement so hopeful in its character and so wide-spread in its extent—is the dawn of a better day, and the pleasing assurance that notwithstanding all present appearance to the contrary, ours will yet be that “happy people,” that “blessed nation whose God is the Lord!”

In the strength of this hope, let us thank God and take courage. For this glorious consummation let us love God more *as individuals*, and serve him better. Let us show forth in our lives and characters, in our conduct and conversation, the holy principles of the religion of Jesus Christ, and strive to bring those principles to bear, as far as we may be able, upon others—in the daily business of life, in our buying and selling, in our paying and receiving, in all our intercourse with our fellow man, and especially *in the moral and religious training of our children*. The family is the *germ* of the state: and children who are permitted to grow up without proper parental restraint and culture, cannot make good citizens. If they do not respect authority and learn obedience in the family circle, you must not expect them to be law-loving and law-abiding members of the state. If you would train them and bequeath them as a noble and worthy legacy to your country, you must train them *first* for God, and dedicate them to Him and His service upon earth, and the enjoyment of His glory in heaven. If our children, if *all* the children of this land were brought up “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” faithfully trained in the fear of God and thoroughly imbued with the principles of religion, we might cheerfully leave them, when the time of our departure comes, with the hope that they would realize, more largely than we have done the *blessedness of that nation whose God is the Lord*.







